

PALAU CAVE PAINTINGS ON AULONG ISLAND

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Abstract. Drawings of the principal motifs have been prepared by Linden Cowell from colour photographs.

The accompanying drawings were made by Linden Cowell of the University of Otago from colour photographs taken by Dr. H. DeWitt of the University of California. Dr. DeWitt visited the Palau group in 1957 as a marine biologist. He was guided to the cave on Aulong Island by Sumang, former guide and interpreter to Douglas Osborne in 1953. Osborne's description of the site (1966, p. 400) at Aulong 4 is:—

"It is a cave or overhang high on the limestone cliff of the north-western end of Aulong . . . It is on what may be a first sea terrace or step. From the sea up, there is first the wave-cut notch, then 50 or 60 feet of rather sheer though climbable and partly vegetated cliff . . . The painted cave was . . . once the back of a larger one. It is now an overhang about 15 feet deep, and 15 to 18 feet high at the mouth, by about 40 feet long. There is an adjacent small room to the north which has a few pictographs. The two overhangs together would total about 60 feet of length. There are no sherds or deposits there . . . The cave is known as Ongewikl Yarsh, a place where pandanus mat sails were woven."

Osborne's record of the paintings is incomplete, and the present series, though not accompanied by a plan, appear to be a much clearer record of some of the principal motifs used. The designs are painted in red ochre on suitable, more or less smooth patches of the cave wall. An epidiascope projection technique was used by Linden Cowell in making the black and white drawings.

Fig. 1. A relatively smooth wall with some indentations. It illustrates the use of both stipple and solid line techniques to produce the paintings. On the lower edge of the area, a solid geometric design appears to overlay a more free flowing stipple design. In the upper left, a series of designs appear to intersect, while the centre and left hand top designs are isolated. The paintings on the left hand side are done on a much rougher surface and are consequently less clear.

Fig. 2. The central portion of this area is smooth and the outer edges are deeply indented. The central design appears to incorporate both a stipple and a solid design, the stipple pattern having a form which appears to vary from that of the solid design. In this whole area it looks as though a series of stipple designs have been overlaid and incorporated into later (?) solid line drawings.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

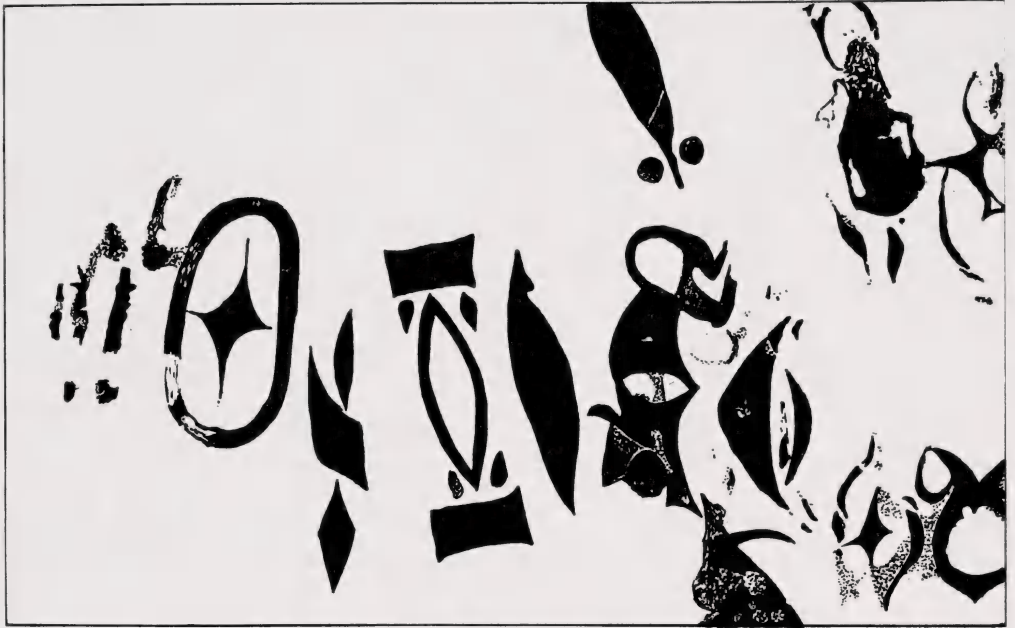


Fig. 3

Fig. 3. This area is fairly smooth, with a number of bubbly projections and large rough areas, unpainted, at the top and bottom left hand corners. The designs are mainly solid line though some stippling is present, but not enough for any inferences to be made. The lining up of the main designs across the wall would suggest the hand of one artist. This series is partly depicted in Osborne (1966, Fig. 106, top left).

REFERENCE

OSBORNE, D.

1966. The archaeology of the Palau Islands . . . *Bull. Bernice P. Bishop Mus.* 230: 1-497.